STREET SPIRIT

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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA

Gentrification and Class Warfare in West Oakland

Business owners put out a newsletter demanding the forced removal of homeless residents, stating: "We want the homeless gone from this neighborhood."



Volunteers serve meals at a homeless encampment in Oakland. Some offer compassion, yet a few business owners have bitterly attacked homeless people and written emails to City officials demanding their forcible removal. Kwalin Kimaathi photo

by Kheven LaGrone

Oakland's gentrification was supposed to benefit all Oakland residents. Instead, gentrification has displaced many of Oakland's most vulnerable citizens. This gentrification caters especially to young outsiders with money.

In order to attract affluent new residents, businesses opened that catered to them. As a neighborhood became more popular with gentrifiers, the current residents, usually African Americans, had to be removed to make room for the gentrifiers. For example, some landlords illegally evicted long-time tenants in order to collect higher rent from more affluent renters that replaced them.

However, Oakland's gentrification may be failing because no one made plans to deal with the displacement of so many people. So they live in homeless encampments visible throughout the city. Seeing these encampments, alongside the gentrifiers' displays of privilege, highlights the inequality of Oakland's gentrification.

Public records show that this led to class warfare in West Oakland between the gentrifiers and the neighboring homeless encampment. The class war got little, if any, media attention. This conflict has taken place in the area at Castro, Brush, Market, 5th, 6th and 7th Streets. This little-known story is told in the public records that document numerous email exchanges between the City of Oakland and the gentrifiers. The homeless people did not have access to those emails.

Thus, the forces of gentrification had the power to define the class warfare and make direct demands on the City of Oakland. The emails also gave them the power to render their homeless neighbors as faceless and nameless.

This class warfare carried out by email included two businesses. One was the Kinetic Arts Center (KAC). According to its mission statement, "Kinetic Arts Center creates innovative and dynamic circus culture through exceptional classes, training and performance."

Another business was *Angel Cakes*, a cupcake shop. According to their website, they'll create "the perfect flavor and design combination for your event — from intimate birthday parties to weddings, baby showers, nonprofit fundraisers and corporate galas." Customers can also drop in to buy fancy cupcakes.

In order to patronize these businesses,

See **Class Warfare in Oakland** *page 11*

A Detention Center Vigil That Defies *La Migra*

by David Bacon

Paola was standing outside the West County Detention Facility, a prison in Richmond, California, for 150 to 300 people awaiting deportation, when she got the phone call. She'd been fearing it for days.

Florencio, her husband, was in another detention center in Arizona, calling to tell her that *la migra* (immigration agents) had caught him in the desert, walking north with a dozen others.

Paola (not her real name) hadn't spoken to Florencio for several weeks, not since the day before he crawled into the luggage compartment of a bus in Puebla in southern Mexico. The bus, he hoped, would take him close to the U.S. border.

It had already been a harrowing journey for himself and Paola's brother Lorenzo. "After we left Guatemala and crossed the river into Mexico, we wound up in a kind of camp in Chiapas," Florencio recalls. "There were hundreds of people there."

When the day to leave on the long trip north finally arrived, the coyotes running the camp organized a kind of shape up. It was not that different from the stories told by an earlier generation of migrants, the braceros (contract farm laborers), who

See **Detention Center Vigil** *page 6*

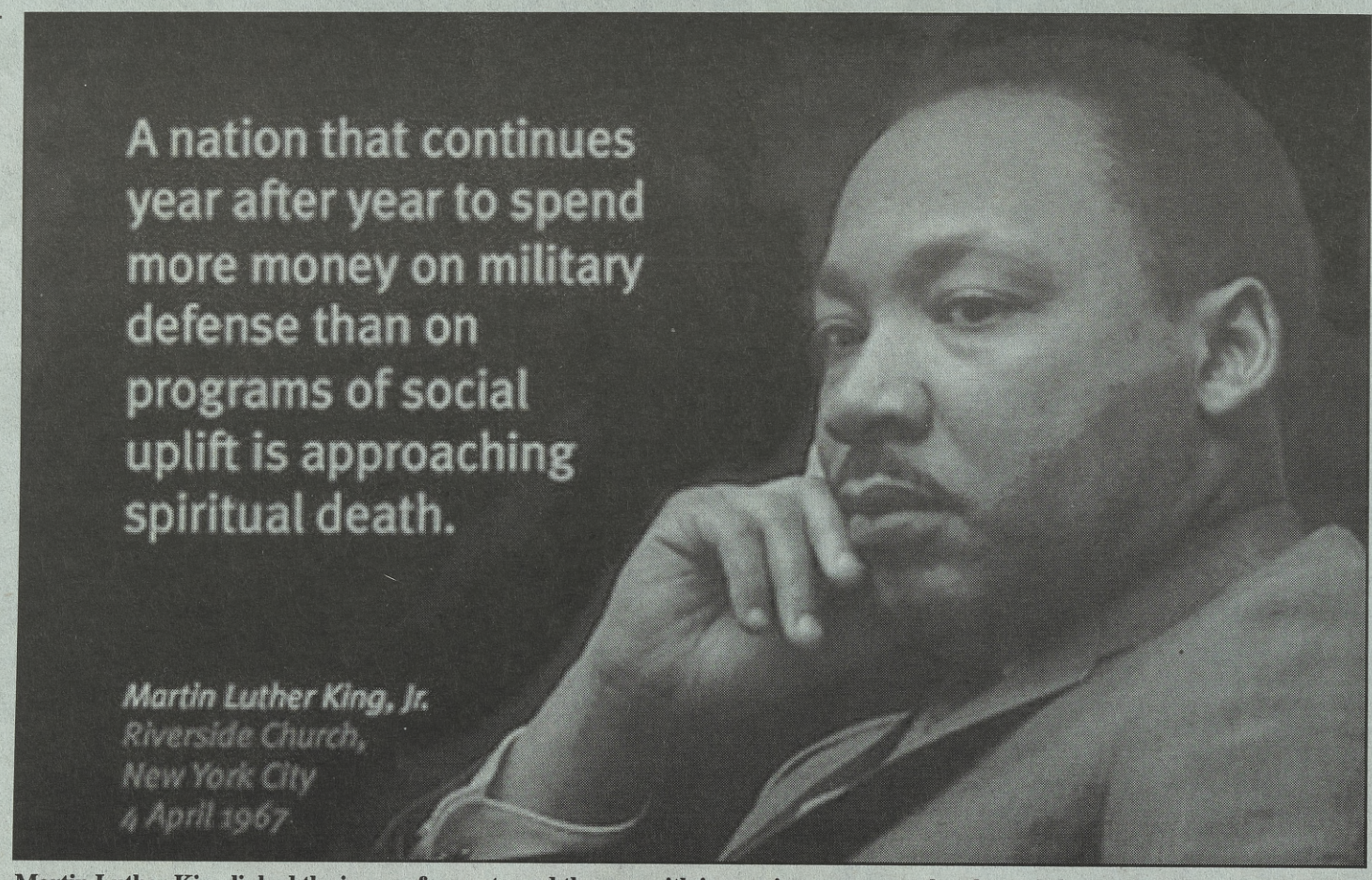


Rev. Pablo Morataya, a Presbyterian minister, comforts Lourdes Barraza at the detention center vigil. David Bacon photo

Inspired by King's Vision, a New Poor People's Campaign Links Religious Faith to Social Justice

Martin Luther King planned the Poor People's Campaign in 1968. Today, poverty is worse than ever, and a new campaign is seeking justice.

by Eleanor J. Bader



Martin Luther King linked the issues of poverty and the war with increasing urgency as he planned the Poor People's Campaign.

The Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, co-chair of the recently launched *Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival,* grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, one of three kids in a family she describes as deeply committed to improving life for the excluded and marginalized.

South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and other peace and anti-apartheid activists were frequent guests in her home, and even as a child, Theoharis understood that religious faith — in her case, Presbyterian — had to be linked to social justice.

This coupling — faith and justice — led Rev. Theoharis to work with the National Union of the Homeless as a University of Pennsylvania undergraduate. "Their organizing was inspired by the Poor People's Campaign led by Dr. King in 1967 and '68, and I quickly learned the extent of the unfinished business that still needed to be done," she says.

By 2001, Theoharis was in New York City, attending Union Theological Seminary and studying "moments in history where poor people crossed racial and geographic lines" to foment change. Her work brought her into contact with scores of activists, including the Rev. Dr. William Barber II, whose Moral Mondays protests in North Carolina helped lay the groundwork for the contemporary Poor People's Campaign.

That campaign kicked off on December 4, 2017, with Theoharis and Barber at the helm. The challenge is enormous. Census figures from 2016 put 12.7 percent of U.S. residents (43.1 million people) in poverty and want, living on an annual income of less than $15,060 for a single person, $30,750 for a household of four.

Theoharis recently spoke to AlterNet reporter Eleanor J. Bader about the campaign and the upcoming 40 Days of Action that will begin on Mother's Day this year.

Eleanor J. Bader: *What are the specific issues that the Poor People's Campaign is focusing on?*

Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis: We're addressing five broad issue areas. The first is systemic racism, which we see as including voter suppression, racist gerrymandering, immigration, and mass incarceration. The second is poverty and includes fair wage campaigns, the need for affordable housing, and access to education and health care. Third is the war economy, the declared and undeclared wars that the U.S. is waging, and the way economic priorities tilt toward militarism and basically line the pockets of military contractors.

These were the three issues that Dr. King spoke of in the first Poor People's Campaign, issues that he believed were inextricably connected. But now we're facing additional concerns. During the 50 years between the first campaign and today, we've experienced enormous environmental destruction and climate change, shifts that disproportionately affect the poor. We have to talk about this and look at how fracking, mountaintop coal removal, and the construction of oil and gas pipelines are devastating communities.

Lastly, we're putting a spotlight on the distorted moral narrative that blames the poor for their problems and presents abortion, gun rights, and gay and trans issues as the main moral issues facing the country.

Right-wing Christians ignore between 2,000 and 2,500 Bible passages that talk about treating the poor with respect and compassion. When Dr. Barber and I speak, people are aware that we're living in a time of deep moral crisis. They understand that when we challenge the theology of Christian nationalists and other conservatives of faith, we're on the side of equality for all. It's our contention that even though people have many viewpoints on abortion and same-gender marriage, if people can just get to know each other and work together, they can learn to fight for justice despite these disagreements.

EJB: *Is the campaign working in all 50 states?*

LT: No, not yet. Right now, we have 32 state coordinating committees that are up and running, the result of years and years of groundwork. When we first began, we mapped out the poorest communities in the U.S. Our research revealed that the states with the highest overall poverty rates also had the worst voter suppression and the highest number of women and children in need.

In addition, states with the lowest number of people with access to health care had the lowest wages, the fewest protections for LGBTQ people, the least environmental protections, and the largest number of military bases.

It became obvious that the powers that be in these states are suppressing the vote, polluting the environment, discriminating against LGBTQ folks, and holding wages down. We believe these facts have the potential of uniting people once they see that their issues are linked.

The 32 committees that are now in place are located throughout the South, and in the Midwest, California, Oregon, Washington, and New England. These states have built fusion coalitions between people of different faiths and races. They've been created by local people, are chaired by poor men and women, and include youth, faith leaders, and representatives of the diversity that exists in that particular locale.

Some of the committees also include people from the National Welfare Rights Organization, which is active in California, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Texas; and activists from Fight for 15; farmworker groups; and organizations of the homeless. I want to point out something else: No matter how supportive or friendly they seem, there are no elected officials or candidates for public office on the coordinating committees. We want to avoid this being about Republicans or Democrats. This is a movement led by moral leaders and people impacted by poverty. It is a ground-up effort about right and wrong.

EJB: *Can you tell me how you and Dr. Barber became co-chairs of the Campaign?*

LT: Dr. Barber and I have been working together for about five years. We did a Moral Revival Tour a while ago and both of us came to the conclusion that we need a new Poor People's Campaign. That said, the pairing was very intentional: A man and a woman, a northerner and a southerner, one African American, one white.

Much of my experience comes from lessons learned from doing work to end homelessness. Rev. Dr. Barber's work comes out of the profound experience of leading the Moral Mondays movement. In addition to weekly gatherings, for 13 years Moral Mondays brought people from all over North Carolina and other parts of the South together for a March that was held on the second Saturday of February.

In 2014 and 2017, more than 100,000 people gathered; these were the largest southern Marches in U.S. history. People talked about voting rights, women's rights, homelessness, LGBTQ issues, militarism, and hospital closures. It was proof that people understood that an injustice to one is an injustice to all.

As a result of our work, both Rev. Dr. Barber and I recognized that when it comes to poverty, systemic racism, and other related issues, it is possible to organize. Furthermore, we saw that poor people are rarely asked to help formulate solutions to the problems they face, and we knew we wanted the campaign to be different.

We have a saying that guides us: We need the plight, fight, and insight of poor people, not just to tell their sad stories, but to show the nation that impacted people have the wherewithal to win social justice. We draw on models like the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida, the Homeless Union, and the Vermont Workers' Center — organizations that show that real change, real transformation, is possible.

EJB: *Tell me about the 40 Days of Action that will begin on Mother's Day, May 13.*

LT: We're planning six weeks of organizing and direct action that will conclude with a big mobilization in Washington, D.C., in late June. Most of the action will take place in the states, however, and we expect to have 25-30 coordinated statehouse actions across the country. People will do what it takes to be heard, including risking arrest.

The 40 Days is about launching something. It is not meant as a short-lived, one-time action but is instead intended to start a deep-rooted movement that takes hold in many places at once. A huge part of the Poor People's Campaign will involve direct moral action to shift the narrative and get people talking about poverty and the issues that impact poor people's lives.

EJB: *Has the organized religious community been supportive of this?*

LT: Yes. In 1968, when Dr. King started the Poor People's Campaign, not a single religious denomination endorsed it. They feared that the Campaign was too radical, that it would not serve the cause of civil rights to talk about poverty. There was also pushback about uniting low-income people across racial lines. Then, when Dr. King preached against the Vietnam War, he went from being a Nobel Peace Prize winner to being someone unpopular. Nonetheless, he believed that the relationship between racism, militarism, and poverty had to be articulated.

It's different today. Already, many national denominations have agreed to engage in the Days of Action. This is not just a statement on a piece of paper, but religious leaders from throughout the country have agreed to pray with their feet. We not only have people from Christian and Jewish groups, but Sikhs,

See **New Poor People's Campaign** *page 5*

Classism, Stigma and Drug Addiction

The idea that there are more drug addicts among people who have lost their homes than there are among people who live in big mansions is simply a lie.

by Andy Pope

Statistics often point to the large percentage of homeless people who are drug addicts. Recently, I read the figure "26 percent" in such a context. That would mean that about one out of every four homeless people is a drug addict.

I don't doubt that this statistic might be true. But do you ever see anybody asking what percentage of upper middle class and wealthy people are drug addicts? Of course not. Why would anybody even bother trying to find out?

This is sheer classism. I have associated with lots of hard-working people whom I would consider to be "the industrious rich," and you wouldn't believe the level of legally sanctioned drug dependency that runs rampant in their circles. Addictive medications such as Ritalin and Adderol, ostensibly prescribed for "Adult ADHD," are essentially used as high-power wake-up drugs. It is also not uncommon to see Klonopin and Ativan used as tranquilizers or as "come-down" drugs to ensure sleep after a long, hard day. Pills are routinely popped, often publicly, in an effort to manage the stress of insanely fast-paced lives.

When I was an itinerant music teacher in cities like Burlingame, Foster City and Menlo Park, almost every person I worked with openly proclaimed that they were using psychiatric drugs. In fact, they would refer to their psychiatrists as "dope dealers" in a colloquial way. Often, the doctor had little or no knowledge of their issues. His or her only role was to dish out drugs. Less talked about, but just as prevalent, was the use of marijuana. I certainly found no fewer "stoners" among the upper middle class than I did among those who struggled to keep their sanity on the streets.

This says nothing about the "idle rich" — people who are rich by inheritance and may never have done a lick of work in their lives. They have so much time on their hands, and so much money, that many of them become addicted to heroin and cocaine — and they buy top grade.

The idea that there are more drug addicts among people who have lost their homes than there are among people who live in big, huge mansions is simply a lie.

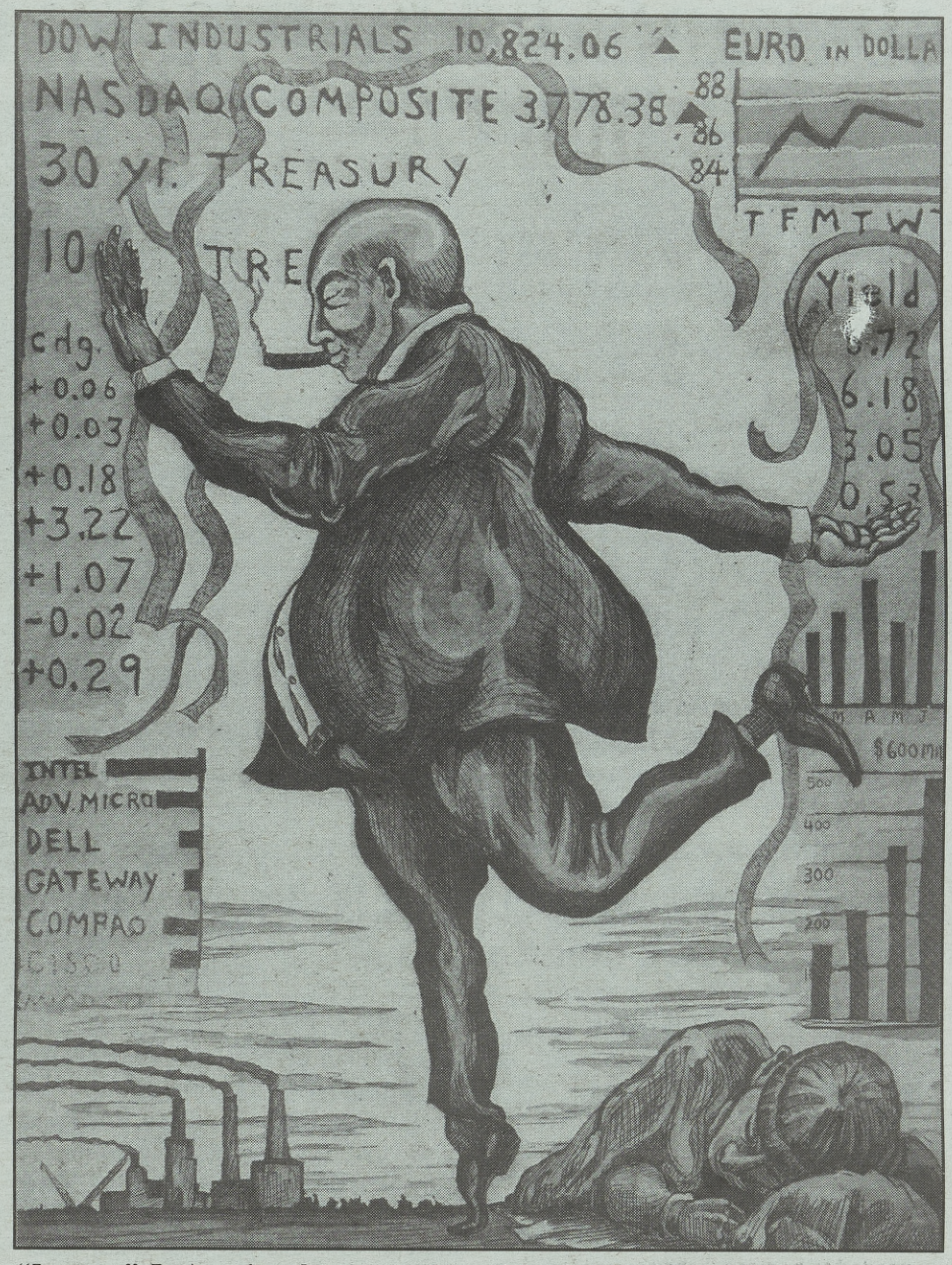
There are plenty of practicing drug addicts among those with privilege. It's just that they're so rich, they're not at risk of losing their homes over it, unlike the other 99%. The only difference between the homeless drug addict and the wealthy one, is that one has lost his privilege. The other one never will, no matter what he does.

And here's another thing that bugs me. If a homeless person is on drugs, it is often assumed that his drug problem *caused* his homelessness. This is another lie. Why cannot people understand that in many cases, the homelessness came first, and the drugs further on down the road?

This is sheer stigma. Sure, if a person is among the working poor or lower middle class, and that person develops a drug problem, they are likely to lose everything and land on the streets. But the overall conditions of homelessness could easily drive a person to drugs who had previously been living a completely sober life.

I know a certain fellow who became homeless pretty fast due to a first-time manic episode. Suddenly, this man was thrust from an insular world of parents, principals, teachers, and elementary school students into a world where all kinds of drug dealers were roaming the streets. Here is a typical conversation that he would have with a drug dealer:

"Hey! You good?"
"What do you mean, am I good?"
"You good! Do you need anything?"



"Investor." **In America, the poor are blamed for their poverty, while the rich are admired even when their banks and companies ruin the economy.** Art by Art Hazelwood

"Need any what?"
"Never mind."

Four years down the road of homelessness, the conversation is a little different:

"Darn, it's cold, and I don't even have a blanket."
"Go to People's Park and steal one."
"I don't want to be a thief."
"You're gonna freeze your buns off."
"Yeah, I know, it's scary."
"Well, I got something that will keep you warm all night."
"Yeah? What's that?"
"This."

And if anybody were to question that there are proportionately as many drug addicts among the 1% as there are among the 99%, I doubt I would even dignify such a question with an answer — since it *is based on an unthinking prejudice* against the poor.

There is nothing about having a lot of money that makes a person superior to one who does not. Rich or poor, the Lord God made them all. But try telling that to some of the more sheltered of the wealthy. Half of those guys are so out of touch, they don't even know the meaning of the word "rich."

I know one thing for sure. Once they learn the meaning of the word "respect," we're all going to be a lot better off.

What You Should Know Before Becoming Homeless

by Andy Pope

Just as colleges hold orientations to give needed information to new students, people who unexpectedly lose their housing and end up living on the streets have a great need for an orientation to help them survive the often bewildering conditions they will face on the streets.

What you should know before becoming homeless? You should know that people will not treat you as a full human being with needs, rights, and sensibilities akin to those of the rest of the human race. You will be continually dehumanized in ways that will confuse you, anger you, and seriously affect your self-esteem and your sense of dignity.

By and large, you will either be faced with severe judgment by those who assume they are innately superior to you, or with a pathetic show of feigned empathy that will come across more like condescension than true compassion.

You will often be lectured by those who have never been in your shoes and have no idea what your life is actually like. These people will never listen to you, because they assume that you have nothing to say to them that is meaningful.

You will be kicked out of your beauty sleep by cops, security guards, property owners, business owners, and worst of all, other homeless people. You might as well divest yourself of all remnants of worldly possessions — cell phones and laptops included — because they are all going to be stolen anyway.

At food services and "feeds," you will be herded around like cattle, and orders will be barked at you as though you were a criminal in a jailhouse. Your First and Fourth Amendment rights will routinely be violated by rookie cops who wake you up in the middle of the night and immediately search your backpack for drugs. During these violations, the cops will also run your "criminal record," since it is also assumed that you are a criminal.

They will be surprised to find out that you are not a criminal, since obviously anyone who loses their house in a foreclosure or their rental in a California Owner Move In Eviction must be a criminal.

After they do find out you are not a criminal, they will callously tell you to "move on" and sleep somewhere else. When you ask them, "where else can I sleep?" they will of course provide no answer, since obviously there isn't one.

Severe sleep deprivation will eventually set in, and it is likely you will become a bit delusional in your thinking. Your confusion will constantly disguise what your true issues are. Tired of harsh judgment, tired of false sympathy, you will rack your brains trying to figure out what is wrong with the way people approach you, and what is lacking in their attitude toward you.

Finally, you will realize that what is lacking is respect. They will not respect you; they will not treat you as an equal; they will ask you inane questions that do not pertain to your situation at all, and then will not bother to listen to your answers. You will get tired of hearing people ask you about the weather, because the weather will be the least of your worries.

You will ultimately conclude that the worst thing about being homeless has nothing to do with hygiene, sleeplessness, malnutrition, weather conditions, difficulty sustaining basic needs, difficulty focusing on anything other than day-to-day survival, or any of the other things that make homelessness miserable for most people.

The worst thing about being homeless, you will undoubtedly conclude, is the way that you are treated. Good luck.

Street Spirit

Editor, Designer: Terry Messman
Vendor Coordinator: J.C. Orton

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***Submissions*: Terry Messman**
***E-mail*: terrystreetspirit@gmail.com**
***Web:* www.thestreetspirit.org**

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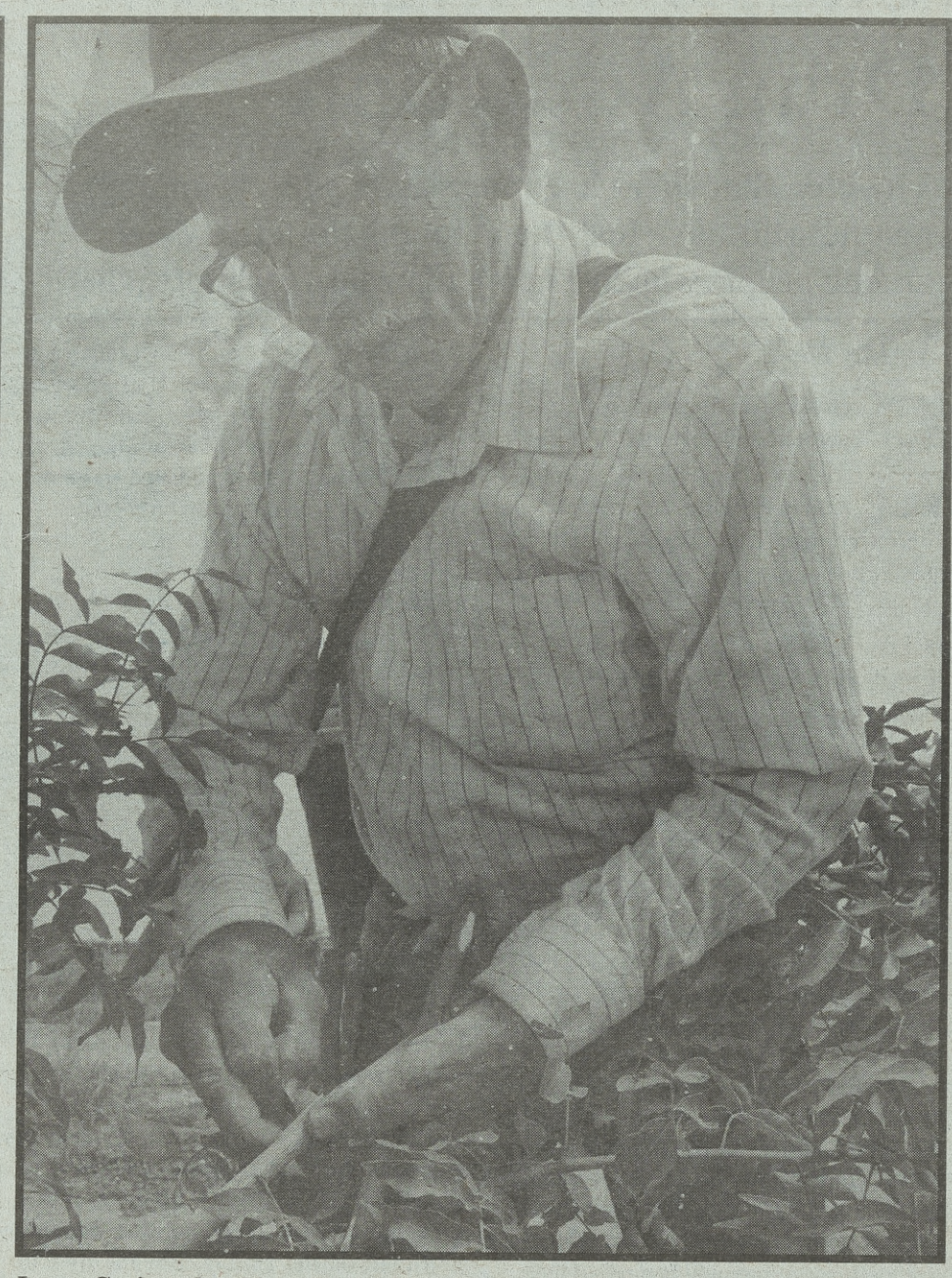
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Journalists Standing on the Side of Social Justice



Immigrants, union members, and people of faith call for an end to deportations.



Lucas Carina, the oldest worker in a crew of farm workers grafting pistachio trees in an orchard near Caruthers, a small town in the San Joaquin Valley.

Carrying a camera became for me a means to organize for social and racial justice, the same goals I had as a union organizer.

Story and photos by David Bacon

Eighty years ago, many photographers were political activists and saw their work intimately connected to worker strikes, political revolution or the movements for indigenous people's rights. Today, what was an obvious link is often viewed as a dangerous conflict of interest.

Photographers must be objective and neutral, the word goes, and stand at a distance from the reality they record. But I believe our work gains visual and emotional power from its closeness to the movements we document. We are not "objective" but partisan — documenting social reality is part of the movement for social change.

Can photographers be participants in the social events they document? As a documentary photographer and journalist, I don't claim to be an unbiased observer. I'm on the side of immigrant workers and unions in the U.S. and share their struggle for rights and a decent life. I take the side of people in Mexico trying to find alternatives for democratic political change. If the work I do helps to strengthen these movements, it will have served a good purpose.

For three decades, I've used a method that combines photographs with interviews and personal histories. Part of the purpose is the "reality check" — the documentation of social reality, including poverty, homelessness, migration and displacement. But this documentation, carried out over a long period of time, also presents some political and economic alternatives proposed by those often shut out of public debate. It examines peoples' efforts to win the power to put some of these alternatives into practice.

So for me, photography is a cooperative project. When I began to work as a photographer and writer, documenting the lives of migrants and farmworkers, I took with me the perspective of my previous work as a union organizer. Carrying a camera became for me a means to organize for social and racial justice, the same goals I had as an organizer.

Bob Fitch, who spent years in the U.S. South as a photographer with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, thinks about himself the same way.

In the recent book, *This Light of Ours*, he remembers, "I did various kinds of organizing for the balance of my life and photographed those activities as I went through. And I perceived myself as an organizer who uses a camera to tell the story of my work, which is true today."

Advocating for social change is part of a long tradition of social documentary photography in the United States and Mexico, and I hope my work contributes to this tradition today. San Francisco photographers Otto Hegel and Hansel Mieth took their cameras into the huge cotton strike of 1933 and the West Coast waterfront strike of 1934. They saw themselves as part of these movements.

One Mieth image from the 1930s shows the shape-up system where workers were hired to unload ships — a scene reminiscent of today's day laborers clustering around a contractor's pickup truck in front of Home Depot. Mieth's photograph became a symbol of humiliating conditions and an appeal to go on strike. She would be proud that longshore workers today have a union hiring hall and no shape-up.

For over a decade, I've worked with the Binational Front of Indigenous Organizations, a Mexican migrant organization, California Rural Legal Assistance and Familias Unidas por la Justicia to document this contradiction. Our project, which led to my book, *In the Fields of the North,* shows extreme poverty, the complete lack of housing for many people and the systematic exploitation of immigrant labor in the fields. But through the photographs and accompanying oral histories, migrants also analyze their situation and demand respect for their culture, basic rights and greater social equality.

At the end of the 1970s, California farm workers were the highest-paid in the United States, with the possible exception of Hawaii's long-unionized sugar and pineapple workers. Today, people are trapped in jobs that pay the minimum wage and often less, and are mostly unable to find permanent year-around work.

In 1979, the United Farm Workers negotiated a contract with Sun World, a large citrus and grape grower. The contract's bottom wage rate was $5.25 per hour. At the time, the minimum wage was $2.90. If the same ratio existed today, with a state minimum of $10.50, farm workers would be earning the equivalent of $19.00 per hour. Today, farm workers don't make anywhere near $19.00 an hour.

In 2008, demographer Rick Mines conducted a survey of 120,000 migrant farm workers in California from indigenous communities in Mexico — Mixtecos, Triquis, Purepechas and others — counting the 45,000 children living with them, a total of 165,000 people. "One third of the workers earned above the minimum wage, one third reported earning exactly the minimum and one third reported earning below the minimum," he found.

In other words, growers were paying an illegal wage to tens of thousands of farm workers. The case log of California Rural Legal Assistance is an extensive history of battles to help workers reclaim illegal, and even unpaid, wages.

Indigenous workers are the most recent immigrants in the state's farm labor workforce, and the poorest, but the situation isn't drastically different for others. The median income is $13,000 for an indigenous family. The median for most farm workers is about $19,000 — more, but still far from a liveable wage.

Low wages in the fields have brutal consequences. When the grape harvest starts in the eastern Coachella Valley, the parking lots of small markets in farm worker towns like Mecca are filled with workers sleeping in their cars.

For Rafael Lopez, a farm worker from San Luis, Arizona, living in his van with his grandson, "the owners should provide a place to live since they depend on us to pick their crops. They should provide living quarters, at least something more comfortable than this."

In northern San Diego County, many strawberry pickers sleep out of doors on hillsides and in ravines. Each year the county sheriff clears out some of their encampments, but by next season, workers have found others. As Romulo Muñoz Vasquez, living on a San Diego hillside, explains: "There isn't enough money to pay rent, food, transportation and still have money left to send to Mexico. I figured any spot under a tree would do."

Compounding the problem of low wages is the lack of work during the winter months. Workers have to save what they can while they have a job, to tide them over. In the strawberry towns of the Salinas Valley, the normal 10 percent unemployment rate doubles after the harvest ends in November. While some can collect unemployment, the estimated 53 percent who have no legal immigration status are barred from receiving benefits.

Yet people have strong community ties because of shared culture and language. Farm workers in California speak 23 languages, come from 13 different Mexican states, and have rich cultures of music, dance, and food that bind their communities together. Migrant indigenous farm workers participate in immigrant rights marches, and organize unions.

Indigenous migrants have created communities all along the northern road from Mexico to the United States and Canada. Migration is a complex economic and social process in which whole communities participate. Migration creates communities, which today pose challenging questions about the nature of citizenship in a globalized world. The function of my photographs, therefore, is to help break the mold that keeps us from seeing this reality.

The right to travel to seek work is a matter of survival for millions of people, and a new generation of photographers today documents the migrant-rights movements in both Mexico and the United States (with its parallels to the civil rights movement).

Like many others in this movement, I use the combination of photographs and oral histories to connect words and voices to images. Together they help capture a complex social reality as well as people's ideas for changing it.

Today, racism is alive and well, and economic inequality is greater now than it has been for half a century. People are fighting for their survival. And it's happening here, not just in safely distant countries half a world away.

As a union organizer, I helped people fight for their rights as immigrants and workers. I'm still doing that as a journalist and photographer. I believe documentary photographers stand on the side of social justice. We should be involved in the world and unafraid to try to change it.

Despite Approval of Billions in Funds in Los Angeles, Homeless Crisis Is Compared to Unwinnable War

"Homelessness is a symbol of the failures of all our institutions." — Greg Spiegel, past homeless coordinator for Los Angeles

by Andrew Gumbel



On Skid Row in Los Angeles, a man posts a sign on his shopping cart telling police not to seize his belongings. David Bacon photo

In Los Angeles, the more the politicians push to solve the city's festering homelessness crisis, the worse it seems to get. Despite approving billions in funds to fight the problem, Los Angeles has seen its homeless population continue to grow.

The city leadership has taken one bold step after another: restructuring the budget to free more than $100 million a year in homelessness funding, sponsoring one voter-approved initiative to raise more than $1 billion for housing, and backing another regional proposal to raise the sales tax and generate an estimated $3.5 billion for support services over the next decade.

Yet, tent cities continue to proliferate in rich neighborhoods and poor, by the beach, the airport, the Hollywood Walk of Fame and within view of City Hall itself.

It's the sorriest urban scene anywhere in America, and the same voters who not so long ago opened their hearts and their wallets to put an end to it are growing increasingly impatient. As the numbers of homeless people continue to rise — the latest figures put the countywide number at 58,000, up more than 20 percent in a single year — and new encampments spring up on sidewalks, under freeways, and along stretches of river and rail lines, the politicians who not so long ago were earning praise for their courage are facing the beginnings of an angry backlash.

"How many people have we housed?" the *Los Angeles Times* asked impatiently in a blistering series of editorials late last month. "How many are we on track toward housing? Is Los Angeles setting the national standard for rapid and effective response to a vexing problem? Or are its leaders merely mastering the art of appearances while passing the buck and hoping things turn around? ... Who's in charge here?"

Most infuriating, to the *Times* and to many others, has been the reluctance of many Los Angeles City Council members to move forward on supportive-housing projects. More than a year after the money became available, just two of the first 10 sites identified as easiest to build quickly have broken ground, leaving the others hostage to neighborhood groups anxious about having people with addiction and mental health problems move in next door.

The politicians are clearly feeling the heat from the *Times* series. Two City Council members responded by announcing they were pushing ahead with housing projects they'd previously blocked.

What is less clear is whether the politicians entirely deserve the opprobrium — whether they really have made no progress, or if it just looks that way because the problem continues to grow for reasons that may be outside of their control.

Greg Spiegel, who served as homelessness coordinator for Mayor Eric Garcetti, and now works for a nonprofit providing legal services to the poor and homeless, said the crisis was so complex — the result of decades of national and local housing policies, as well as broader macroeconomic trends — that it could never be fully solved as long as the underlying factors went unaddressed. Some in City Hall, he said, compared it to an unwinnable war.

"Back in 2015, 2016, you had elected officials saying, 'we know this is Vietnam, but who cares, we're going to do something about it anyway,'" Spiegel said. "That was brave, and it hadn't been done before."

By many measures, those efforts have in fact made a difference. "We saw 14 or 15,000 people permanently housed last year," Spiegel added. "That's a lot of people, more than ever before, triple what it was three or four years ago."

And since a sales-tax boost went into effect, the number of social workers, mental health specialists and others working directly with people on the streets has quadrupled across the county, according to Alisa Orduna, the homelessness coordinator for Santa Monica.

"When you see someone yelling outside a 7-Eleven in your neighborhood, you can have a much higher degree of confidence now that that person is on someone's radar, which is the first step toward getting them off the street," she said.

Orduna likened the region's response to homelessness to the national response to the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. The effort entails building a whole new infrastructure from scratch — one that involves churches, private businesses, not-for-profit groups and individual volunteers, as well as government agencies.

For example, Methodist churches across South Los Angeles, one of the city's poorest neighborhoods, are looking for ways to use their land and buildings for housing. A church in Santa Monica recently opened up housing units for homeless college students.

The crisis, however, is galloping ahead of such initiatives. Los Angeles has a 2 percent vacancy rate, which is causing rents to soar and creating a whole new pool of people who are just one medical emergency or job loss away from becoming homeless themselves.

"We have got to make it easier, less costly and faster to build housing of all types in Los Angeles," said Michael Lens, a housing policy specialist and professor of urban planning at the University of California, Los Angeles. Politicians are only part of the problem, he said. He also sees a pervasive attitude, especially among older Angelenos, that this should be a city predominantly of single-family homes and that creating greater urban density is somehow a betrayal of the city's essence.

That culture is now changing — as evidenced by the revival of downtown Los Angeles over the past two decades as a place to live as well as work, and the flourishing of many other previously car-centric neighborhoods.

In government circles, experts are trying hard to break old molds and create new lines of authority. One idea is to allow the county homeless services agency to decide where to build housing, so local politicians don't have to take so much heat from NIMBY-ish residents' associations.

Another idea is to rewrite the city's longstanding rent control rules, which tend to fail landlords and tenants alike. A third is to make building regulations less rigid so, for example, lower-income apartment blocks are not required to include a parking space for every unit.

The problem for elected officials is that such changes come slowly and out of the public eye, while the evidence of crisis on the streets remains all too palpable. That's a particularly thorny problem for Garcetti, who is considering a run for president in 2020 and can expect to see footage of the human misery outside City Hall endlessly replayed in his rivals' political ads.

Many homelessness experts said it was understandable that people would rush to harsh judgments, but politicians should get credit for steady if unspectacular progress.

"The city can work on land use policy and housing construction, but a lot of what it does is a response to a broader crisis that it doesn't have the tools to solve," said Spiegel. "Homelessness is a symbol of the failures of all our institutions."

Andrew Gumbel's story is from "Outside in America," a series by the London-based *Guardian* that reports on homelessness in the western United States.

The New Poor People's Campaign

from page 2

Muslims, and indigenous tribes are coming together to participate.

EJB: *What do you want the 40 Days of Action to achieve?*

LT: We aim to make some legislative breakthroughs, but, more importantly, what we want to do at this stage, the launching stage, is to get people to identify the issues facing poor people and make it impossible for people running for office — or who are in office already — to ignore poverty and the issues that impact poor people. We want to shift the narrative to challenge the theology of Christian nationalists to address the moral crisis of millions of people who are living without homes or clean water, or the millions who are discriminated against.

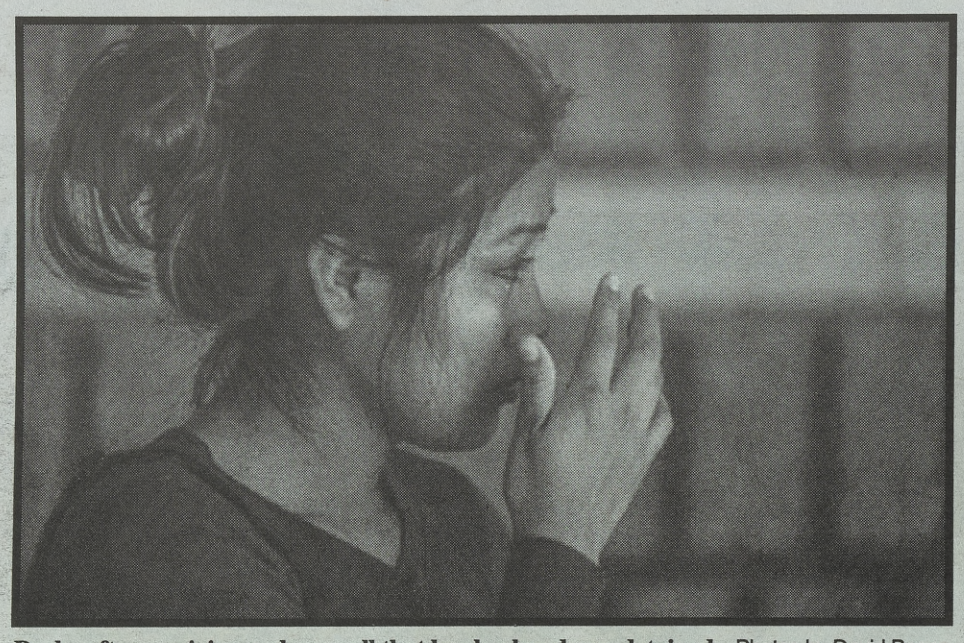
The fact that seven million Americans are right now threatened by cuts to the Home Energy Assistance Program, HEAP, is a moral crisis. There are countless other examples.

Rev. Dr. Barber and I were somewhat surprised by the support we've received. We expected to have to convince people about the urgency of these concerns, but people get it. They're ready to participate in a movement that pulls diverse communities together across race, gender, religion, and geography. The enthusiasm and support for the Campaign has been incredible, especially among people who are not making ends meet and the clergy who see them struggling.

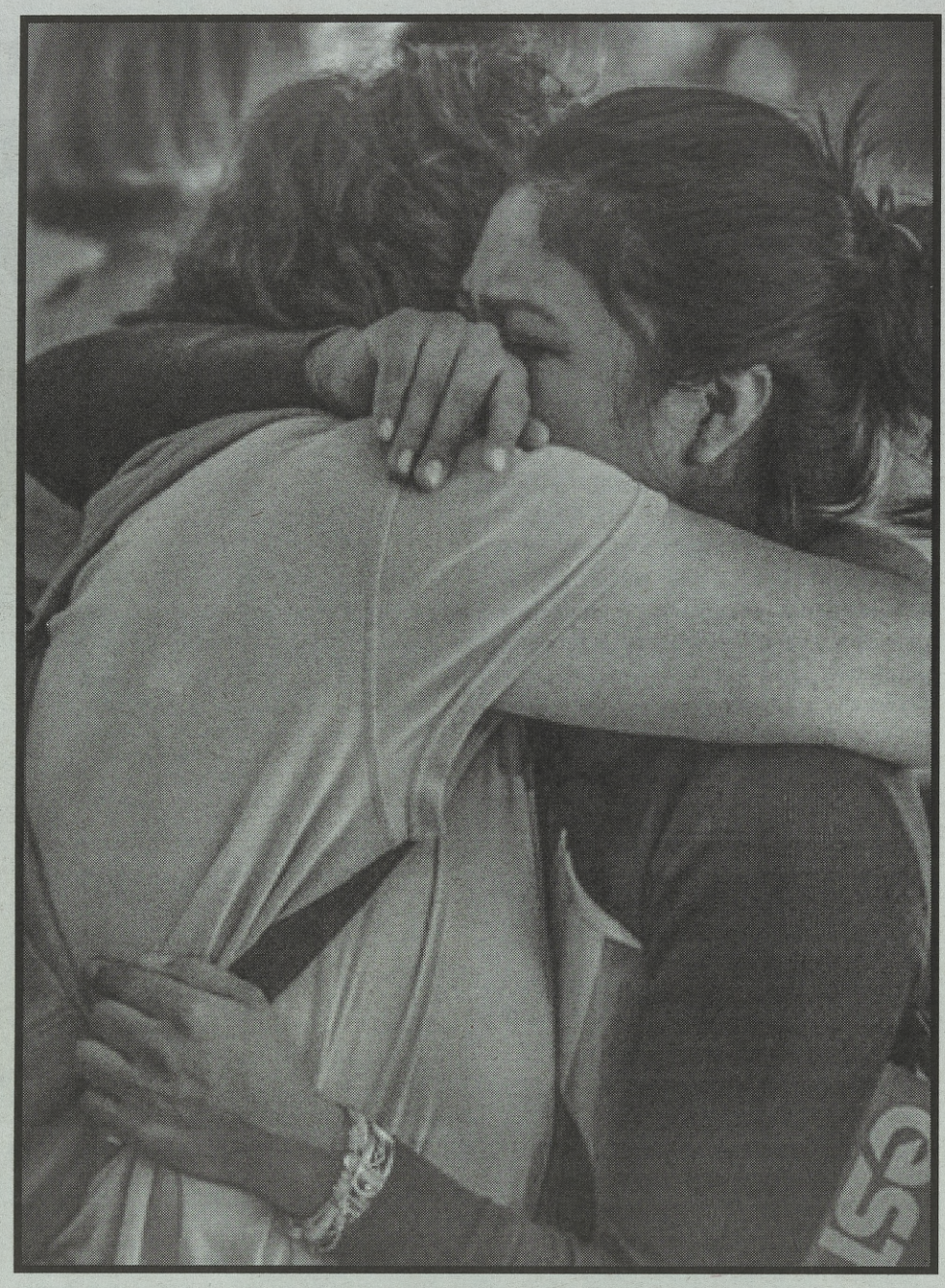
EJB: *Are you optimistic that the movement will succeed despite the fact that Donald Trump is in the White House?*

LT: I'm feeling really energized! Poor People's Campaign leaders across the U.S. are heroes and heroines. They're doing amazing work against all odds. This is a grassroots, from the ground up, movement. Most of the work of the Campaign is being done at the state level, and right now we're working to build up the power of people to do more than win concessions. We want to ensure that whatever is won is both maintained and expanded. The fact that a massive, moral, direct action movement, led by impacted people and faith leaders, is being created is tremendously exciting.

Eleanor J. Bader teaches English at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, NY. This article appeared on Alternet.org



Paola, after receiving a phone call that her husband was detained. Photos by David Bacon



Paola is comforted after learning that her husband was taken to a detention center.

Detention Center Vigil in East Bay

from page 1

recall being herded together at Mexican way stations, inspected and shipped to the border between 1942 and 1964.

"Different coyotes called us by numbers, separating us into groups," Florencio says. "Then they put 80 or 90 of us into the back of a truck. There was so little space we had to stand pushed up against each other like sardines. It was a bumpy ride, and soon people began to get sick and faint, especially the pregnant women. They stopped the truck and gave us pills and lemons, but people were already throwing up and the smell was terrible."

The ride resumed, but after 12 hours the people inside began to bang on the walls. Hearing the noise, the driver pulled over. "He let us out and told us to run around a little," Florencio says. "Then we got back in, and it was another 12 hours." When the truck got to Puebla, Florencio *called Paola to tell her he was coming.*

He got through the next stage from Puebla hidden in the luggage compartment of a bus. That took him to Sonora. There, in a house near the border, the group faced another obstacle.

"The mafia guys came and told us they controlled this territory, and we had to pay another $1,000 to get to the line to cross," Florencio says. "Some of us knew this would happen, and we'd already paid the coyote. I don't know what happened to the others. Soldiers came, but they didn't see any problems, and let us keep moving."

Not having money to pay at this stage could have been fatal. In the last decade, mass graves of migrants have been discovered across the desert of Mexico's northern states. Many guess that these were migrants too broke to pay the toll. Perhaps others were robbed and killed.

For Florencio's group, actually crossing the line wasn't the big problem. It was getting to a place north of it, where they could get picked up by a van to take them to Phoenix. To get to the meeting place, they had to walk three days in the heat through rocks, sand and sagebrush.

"On the third day, one boy from my hometown got pains in his stomach, and began fainting," Florencio says. "At first I said we had to stay with him, but the coyote said we had to leave him and that the Border Patrol would find him. If we stayed we'd all be caught."

In the end, that's what happened anyway. The group passed across a freeway, but Florencio began hearing helicopters. They all ran. He tried hiding under a bush, but an agent on a motorcycle found him. He was taken to a detention center close by. When he called Paola, it was the day of the monthly vigil in front of the West County Detention Facility in Richmond, nearly 900 miles north.

"I was there with people from the church who were helping us," Paola said. "We'd been praying for people they knew who were inside, and we began singing. Then my cell phone rang. I was so afraid of getting that call, but I knew what it would be. Then they were praying for me." She collapsed into the arms of a church member next to her, both of them weeping.

At the end of the detention center vigil, the people assembled there clap, shout and make enough noise that the detainees inside can hear them. "We want them to know we're here, that someone knows they're inside, and that our community cares what happens to them," explains Rev. Deborah Lee, director of the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity (IM4HI). "When we started in 2011, our idea was to put out a call to people of faith and conscience concerned about what was happening to immigrants, to bear witness and provide a way for them to act on that concern."

On the first Saturday of the month, a church or congregation brings its members to the center to bear witness. For an hour they speak out, much in the style of a Quaker meeting, remembering migrants who've suffered as a result of U.S. policies of detention and deportation. They sing, pray, make impassioned political speeches condemning the immorality of the center looming behind them, and talk about the reasons why people are forced into migrating to begin with.

As the years have gone by, the vigils have changed. At first they were made up mostly of congregations from progressive, middle-class churches. Then some of those churches went from hosting vigils to providing sanctuary to migrant families threatened with deportation. Churches have raised funds for bonds and emergency support, found housing and rides for released detainees, and accompanied newcomer families.

"Accompaniment," a term used by faith and solidarity activists, came out of efforts to protect activists in El Salvador from the death squads in the 1980s. People show their solidarity with those who are in danger by accompanying them, physically or by helping them survive. Today it's applied to migrants as well. Activists support a family by giving them sanctuary, helping them find food and shelter, getting them legal help.

As sanctuary congregations have multiplied to 32 throughout the Bay Area, migrants themselves have increasingly participated in the vigils. "We always include testimony from directly impacted families as well as a call to action," Lee adds. "We started very small — 15 to 20 — and now it's averaging 100 people."

Berkeley's St. John's Presbyterian Church helped Paola and her mother, who fled violence in Guatemala in 2014, gain refugee status. The family then came to the vigil at the West County Detention Facility to speak out. "Because these families are with us, they provide a first-hand account of why they were forced to leave home," Lee said at the vigil, urging other congregations to get involved. "We hear the pain of the separation of their families in their voices and see it in their eyes."

St. John's was one of the first churches to give sanctuary to immigrants. "In the early 1980s we saw people fleeing the wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and felt we had to do something to help them," says Fred Goff, a member of the congregation who brought Teresa and Paola to the vigil.

The vigils have grown to involve more than people of faith. Some have been organized by immigrant community organizations, like Mujeres Unidas y Activas, which organizes immigrant working women in San Francisco and the East Bay. Local high schools and colleges have organized others, and a Jewish congregation, Kehilla Community Synagogue, has started its own vigil on second Sundays.

When workers at a local foundry were fired for not having immigration papers, Lee and the East Bay Interfaith Immigration Coalition began meeting with them in the Lutheran Church near the University of California, Berkeley, working with a labor/community coalition called the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE). A few workers came to a vigil, and people of faith helped organize a community march and hunger strike to protest anti-immigrant firings.

After hearing from people like Teresa and Paola, Rev. Lee and IM4HI began holding meetings throughout the Bay Area to talk about the reasons for forced displacement and migration, and for the growth of the detention and deportation industry. For two years, she's organized delegations to Central America together with La Fundación SHARE, to support social justice movements there, and to give congregations in California a first-hand experience of the reasons why people leave home.

Over many Saturdays, the vigils have provided a way for activists to reach out to people inside the center as well. On a recent Saturday, Lourdes Barraza and her daughters Sofia, Isabel and Anna, waited to hear news of Fernando, her husband and the girls' father. The following Tuesday would be Fernando's birthday, and he'd already spent three months inside, staring at the concrete walls of his cell.

Rev. Pablo Morataya gathered members of his congregation at the First Hispanic Presbyterian Church in East Oakland, a sanctuary congregation, as well as other pastors and lay ministers serving immigrant congregations throughout the Bay Area. They went to the detention center to hold a vigil for Fernando. "There are risks," Pastor Morataya says, "but for us it is a calling of our faith."

At the vigil for Fernando, one of Lourdes' daughters had written birthday greetings on a large card, and placed it on an overturned milk crate covered with a cloth. First one boy stepped forward and signed it. Then two older congregants did the same. Finally a line stretched out of people adding their names and greetings.

Despite the support and greetings for Lourdes and her daughters, it was still an awful experience to think of Fernando inside. They'd tried to arrange bail for him so that he would be able to come home.

"But they told me he didn't qualify because he'd already been deported once," Lourdes said. "He's been living in this country for many years. He is not a threat to society. All he does is work, and all I do is work, too. I don't know how we'll survive without him. I need my husband and the girls need their father."

She broke down and began crying.

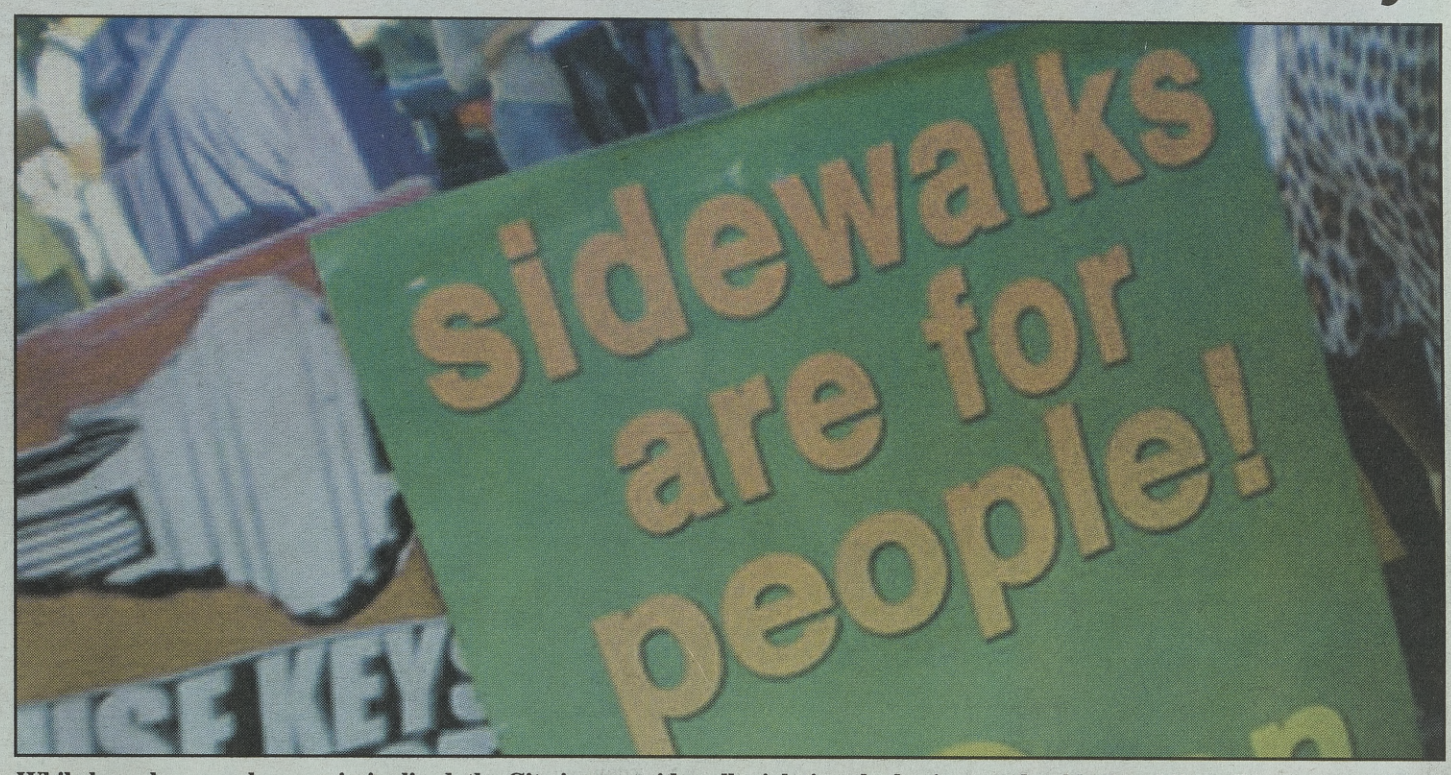
In October, Fernando was dropping off the youngest of their three daughters at her daycare center in San Jose. As he pulled away from the curb, he saw he was being followed by the vehicles that figure in the nightmares of millions of immigrants — the green cars of *la migra*.

He must have wondered whether he could run for it, and what that might mean for his family. He decided instead to pull into a shopping mall parking lot. The ICE

See **Detention Center Vigil** *page 7*

The Crime Wave They Don't Mention in Berkeley

by Carol Denney



While homeless people are criminalized, the City ignores sidewalk violations by businesses that block public walkways every day.

It's a crime wave. Businesses all over the town of Berkeley are violating the law, operating in broad daylight without the proper city permits. Tables, chairs, potted plants, sandwich signboards, rolling racks and sturdy tables full of merchandise on the public right of way, all without legal permits.

Perhaps it doesn't sound all that serious. But consider that in the meantime, a majority of the Berkeley City Council is poised to criminalize people who have more than three square feet of belongings with them on the sidewalk — on the grounds of an urgent need to clear the way for pedestrians while ignoring the more obvious sidewalk violations by businesses blocking hundreds of square feet of public walkways daily.

The vote on the three square foot law, the kinder, gentler version of the two square foot law of the previous council, could come to the current council in the next few weeks unless less discriminatory perspectives prevail.

Berkeley's willingness to publicly demonstrate its tilted attitude toward those suffering the brunt of a housing crisis it created in the first place hardly needs another pointed portrait, but the permit-free furniture splayed across the public sidewalk by businesses illustrates it well with a back story only those steeped in the mysteries of zoning and public works can unravel.

It's pretty simple. Prior to 2011, the Zoning Department issued use permits for sidewalk seating which gave private property owners entitlements for the public right of way, an authority it did not have. This means anybody who even thinks they have a permit is mistaken, although they operate in a nebulous gray zone until the Zoning Officer terminates the previous permit illegally issued by Land Use Planning and the applicant reapplies to the Public Works Department for the appropriate legal permit from the correct agency.

None of this, by the way, applies to Ashby Avenue or San Pablo Avenue, which are state highways and "cannot be issued Sidewalk Seating permits" since Caltrans, the governing entity, will not issue them.

This can't be news to the City of Berkeley, but it doesn't seem to have percolated down to code enforcement officers or the police officers otherwise obsessed with permit-free sidewalk blocking by people the Berkeley City Council majority thinks have way too much stuff — poor and unhoused people.

The urgency cited by the Mayor's office in promoting the three square foot legislation to free Berkeley sidewalks of the tyranny of homeless people's belongings does not seem to extend to the chairs, tables, potted plants, sandwich signboards and merchandise decorating business frontage, despite its larger role in sidewalk obstruction.

Watch closely as the circle is squared for businesses wishing to capitalize on their proximity to public sidewalks, while people in the throes of poverty are ticketed and scorned for taking up public space.

Detention Center Vigil

from page 6

agents jumped out of their cars, put him in cuffs, and took him to a detention center. When he was finally able to call his home, all he could do was leave a message: "Don't worry. I am not going to get deported right away; just stay calm."

Quick deportation was indeed a big danger. Fernando had been deported in 2012, Lourdes recalled. He was picked up on a Friday and in Tijuana by the following Sunday. But he came back because she was here. His family, his life — all were in San Jose, not Tijuana. Like Paola and Florencio, the bonds of love and life would not and could not be denied.

To ICE, however, being deported once before makes you a criminal subject to jail and to their euphemism for deportation — "removal." Since October, Fernando has been imprisoned in the West County Detention Facility, nearly 60 miles from San Jose. When he appealed to be released on bail, ICE field director David Jennings refused.

"I could not believe it was all happening again," Lourdes told Cindy Knoebell, a volunteer for Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC). "I told our daughters that their father had been detained and they completely broke down sobbing. My oldest is now on an independent study program because she can barely get out of bed in the morning. It is tough because I am alone now and have to take care of my daughters' needs without any help. I am completely consumed by fear and anxiety. I worry constantly about how long I'll be able to keep a roof over our heads."

Knoebell reports that Lourdes debated for a long time whether to come to the vigil and speak. She'd heard about many other families facing the same disaster. "But we have nothing to be ashamed of," she said.

Inside the detention center, the monthly noise has not only let Fernando know there are supporters outside. It has also encouraged detainees to begin protesting what they say are terrible conditions.

The West County Detention Facility is housed in a much larger jail, one of four Contra Costa County lockups. Its official capacity is 1,096 people, of whom 150 to 300 are detainees in the facility run by ICE, which pays $6 million a year to the county for using it. Some immigration detainees are held because ICE says they're in the country illegally. Others are asylum seekers who are detained immediately on arrival in the U.S. or legal residents with past offenses (often very minor ones) that makes them deportable.

So they await a hearing before an immigration judge. That hearing, however, is not the normal courtroom procedure one might imagine. The judge sits in a room in the ICE building on Sansome Street in San Francisco. The immigrant sits in a room at the detention center in Richmond. The hearing takes place over the Internet. If immigrants have a lawyer, their chances of staying in the U.S. are better, but odds are not good even then.

People like Fernando wait, while weeks stretch into months and even years.

In October, the immigration detainees went public about what that waiting is like. In a letter written to CIVIC by one of the prisoners, Nancy Meyer, and signed by 27 others, women described being held in cells for 23 hours a day. While regular inmates in the county jail section of the facility get classes and other resources, the immigration detainees don't.

The cells are grouped in pods, with a bathroom that is supposed to serve them all. There are no toilets in the cells. If the cell door is locked, a prisoner has to ask to be let out in order to go to the bathroom. While Contra Costa County Sheriff David Livingston says doors are normally open, the women signing the letter denied this. Instead, they charged, they're told to "hold it" and have to urinate or defecate into plastic bags.

One detainee told immigration Judge Joseph Park in October that she preferred being deported to staying in the jail. In a phone interview with *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Otis R. Taylor, Dianny Patricia Menendez said detainees put the plastic bags over a trash can in order to go to the bathroom. Their one hour of free time to make calls to family or take a shower is often canceled, she added.

ICE did not respond to the allegations of bad conditions. However, Taylor wrote that the detainees who spoke with him were later punished by being denied soap, shampoo and the chance to brush their teeth.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein was one of several elected officials to protest. She wrote acting ICE director Thomas Homan in December, saying, "It has been reported that the conditions are so deplorable that detainees are requesting deportation over pursuing claims in immigration court."

Criticism also came from U.S. Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (D-Richmond), State Sen. Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley), Assemblyman Tony Thurmond (D-Richmond), Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia and Richmond Mayor Tom Butt.

Outside the West County jail, a few minutes after Paola got the call from Florencio saying he'd been caught, she got a second one that frightened her even more. Her brother Lorenzo was hiding in a small community between Tucson and the border. He'd been traveling with Florencio, but the coyotes separated them in northern Sonora.

Once across the border, Lorenzo lost his own group, and a friendly resident gave him temporary refuge in a garage. Terrified that the Border Patrol, which was constantly circulating in the area, would find him, he called Teresa. At the vigil, church members began making calls to Arizona, trying to find help. Finally a person was contacted who drove down from Tucson and rescued him.

It was only a temporary respite, however. Not long afterwards, Lorenzo was picked up and deported. When he calls Teresa and Paola these days, it's from Guatemala once again.

Since Florencio had tried to cross the border twice before and had been caught, he wasn't deported immediately when he was picked up in Arizona. Instead, he was charged in the special court for immigrants in Tucson, Operation Streamline. Afterwards, he spent seven months in an Arizona prison before finally being released on bail while he appeals his deportation order.

To Rev. Lee, the stories of Florencio, Lorenzo and Fernando, with their repeated attempts to cross the border to reunite with their families, are a natural human response to separation. She cited another example in an opinion piece she cowrote with Bob Lane, a faith leader at EBASE, for the *San Jose Mercury News*.

"Consider the story of Alfonso Martinez Sanchez, a 39-year-old father of five U.S. citizen children and his family's main breadwinner," she wrote. "Five years ago, a trip to a store to buy milk led to a senseless deportation. Alfonso repeatedly tried to come home to his family. Wouldn't you? The Border Patrol arrested Alfonso several times, but he never gave up on his family. He died of heatstroke in the desert trying to reunite."

When Rev. Lee thinks about what's happened to Paola and Teresa, to Florencio and Lorenzo, to Lourdes and her three children, to Fernando, it's clear to her that for them to survive, people have to act. "We can't just watch the immigration policy of this country play itself out and do nothing, while ICE and the Border Patrol hunt people down and tear their families apart," she said at a recent vigil.

"The administration talks about our efforts to protect people and fight this detention system as though this was just a state or a city passing a law to defy their enforcement efforts. What they don't understand is that these laws exist because our community is making a moral commitment and acting on it, and our representatives are responding to that. Sanctuary isn't just a law. It's our community defending people in danger."

Sanctuary is a vigil in front of the detention center.

Kerry's Kids — A Dream That Wouldn't Die

The undying devotion of an Oakland pediatrician who cared for homeless children

My Back Pages

***Editor*: I will retire in August 2018 as editor of *Street Spirit*. Each month, I will publish some of the most memorable stories from my back pages.**

The story of Oakland pediatrician Kerry Spooner Dean still haunts me. It's the story of a young woman, a wounded healer who overcame great personal pain to live out her dream of health care for the poorest children. Her dream refused to die, even when the young doctor was murdered.



Dr. Kerry Spooner-Dean provides health care to Oakland children in a medical van — her life's dream before her tragic death.

by Terry Messman

Oakland pediatrician Karen Kruger doesn't look much like your standard-issue medical doctor as she sprawls on the floor of an emergency shelter, laughing and reading out loud to a group of giggling, excitable kids, with her own five-year-old son balanced precariously on her lap, while simultaneously throwing a football to Bobby Hill, an exuberant seven-year-old boy with a strong, but wild arm.

This isn't your traditional, antiseptic hospital environment either — this is a shelter for scores of homeless people in Berkeley run by BOSS (Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency). And Karen Kruger, M.D., who just came off a 24-hour shift as a pediatrician at Children's Hospital in Oakland, is not outfitted in a sterile white coat and air of clinical detachment. She's wearing blue jeans and bearing teddy bears for her patients, and she's come to a homeless shelter as an unpaid volunteer, with two of her own young children in tow, to provide free "house calls" to children whose only home is a shelter.

The kids she's seeing aren't paying customers, or covered by medical plans or health insurance. No, they're Kerry's Kids. They're the children loved and cared for in absentia by Kerry Spooner-Dean, a brilliant young pediatrician whose life was cut short when she was brutally murdered in her Oakland home in May 1998.

Everyone who works at the mobile health clinic that now bears her name is aware that Kerry Spooner-Dean's life dream was to deliver free medical care to the very doorsteps of homeless shelters and battered women's refuges so the poorest children would not be shut out of the health-care system.

And every pediatrician, every volunteer for Kerry's Kids, every van driver, every family member raising funds, knows that Kerry entrusted her kids to them to care for now that she no longer can. They know it is a sacred trust. In carrying out Kerry's last dream, they are caring for the children she was forced to leave behind.

The homeless children being immunized and cared for in the East Bay — at Harrison House in Berkeley, and the Salvation Army, Women's Refuge, and the Henry Robinson Multi-Service Center in Oakland — are Kerry's legacy to us, the part of her spirit that outlived her short life. She left a lasting impression on the talented doctors and dedicated volunteers who are now keeping alive her vision of free and accessible health care for the poorest children of all.

The brilliant young doctor, only 30 when she was murdered, dreamed of overcoming the lack of health insurance, the institutional obstacles, the language barriers and transportation difficulties that prevented homeless children from accessing health care. She was one of those rare people with the gift of inspiring others to carry on her dream, even beyond the span of her short life.

"Kerry's death was so sudden and seemingly purposeless and shocking that I think there was a need for people that loved her to carry on her memory in a way that she would look down on from her cloud and be happy about."

— Dr. Karen Kruger, Oakland pediatrician



Kerry's Kids sends volunteer doctors and nurses in a medical van to homeless programs and shelters to deliver on-site health care to poor and uninsured kids.

Karen Kruger, Kerry's friend and fellow pediatrician at Children's Hospital Oakland said, "It's interesting to be so young and to have her work live on, to be so young and yet accomplish the kind of work that *could* live on. You know, most people spend their lifetime trying to accomplish that."

During her lifetime, Kerry was already making that dream come true, by anyone's standards, through her work as a pediatrician at Children's Hospital, one of the finest pediatric hospitals on the West Coast. Matthew Uretsky, a volunteer coordinator at Kerry's Kids, notes that many doctors at Children's Hospital could double their incomes by working elsewhere, but are dedicated to working at a facility that accepts all children at the door, no matter their income levels.

But in the course of her three-year residency, Kerry realized that many children never made it to Children's Hospital in the first place — homeless kids who languished without medical attention in the shelters of Berkeley and Oakland; kids whose parents had been evicted and had to scramble day and night for shelter and food; kids whose moms had been battered and were living in fear in a women's refuge; children from refugee families whose parents didn't speak enough English to navigate the incomprehensible maze of medical insurance forms; kids whose parents were too bone-tired from standing in soup-kitchen lines to take four bus-transfers to keep a doctor's appointment for an immunization.

Dr. Kerry Spooner-Dean's central insight was that health care had to be delivered to homeless children, not the other way around. Dr. Karen Kruger, who supervised and taught Kerry during her residency at Children's Hospital, saw Kerry's dream take shape over the years.

"In the short time between when she finished her residency and when she was killed, she wanted to go a step further," Kruger said. That next step was a mobile health van that carried free medical care directly to children in homeless shelters.

The dream came closer to reality when Oakland Head Start donated the van, and closer still when Kerry completed her residency and passed the rigorous final exam in pediatrics in January 1998.

Then, tragically, the dreamer died.

A few months after passing her final medical exam, Kerry was stabbed to death in her Rockridge home on May 5, 1998, by Jerrol Glen Woods, a carpet cleaner hired to clean the rugs in her home.

Woods had seven prior felony convictions and had served 12 years in federal prison for a bank robbery before his release on probation in 1996. He was caught a week after the murder using Kerry's stolen credit cards, and admitted to the police his guilt in the brutal killing. He entered a guilty plea to murder with special circumstances, and was sentenced to life in prison without parole on August 4, 1998.

'ONGOING ACTS OF KINDNESS'

Kerry was killed a few weeks before the fifth anniversary of her marriage to architect Daniel Dean. Immediately after his wife's murder, Daniel said: "We are focused on turning this horrific act of violence into several ongoing acts of kindness." He was as good as his word.

Kerry's family and medical friends refused to let her dream die. Karen Kruger said in an interview with *Street Spirit*: "Kerry had this dream. She had many things started, and then her death was so sudden and seemingly purposeless and shocking that I think there was a need for people that loved her to carry on her memory in a way that she would look down on from her cloud and be happy about. A bunch of people loved her. A bunch of people were in the same field at the place she worked, and she had already made a lot of connections."

The words "undying devotion" leap to mind in trying to understand Kerry's dedication to the cause of free, accessible health care for the poorest children —

See **Kerry's Kids** *page 9*

Kerry's Kids

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because, as it turned out, even death could not stop her dream. Her friends and family labored to create Kerry's Kids literally in defiance of her tragic death.

Bob Savio, M.D., worked closely with Kerry during their residency together at Children's Hospital, and has volunteered with Kerry's Kids for three years now, providing pediatric care to homeless children at Henry Robinson Multi-Service Center in downtown Oakland. He said Kerry's dream has helped fill a very serious gap in health care in the East Bay.

"Her dream was to help out inner-city kids in Oakland," Dr. Savio explained. "She saw a deep need. Before Kerry's Kids there was no free medical care for kids in Oakland. It blew me away when I came to Oakland from Seattle, where there are great homeless clinics. It blew me away to be in a big urban center with a lot of socioeconomic need that had no resources for free medical care for kids in the city. Kerry saw that too."



Kerry's Kids pediatrician Karen Kruger visits with homeless children at Harrison House in Berkeley. Lydia Gans photo



Dr. Karen Kruger reads to a homeless child at a Berkeley shelter. Lydia Gans photo

A FUNNY, SUNNY, JOYFUL PERSON

In interviews today, nearly four years after her death, her friends, medical colleagues and family talk about Kerry's funny, sunny, joyful personality with as much fresh enthusiasm as if they had just had lunch with her. They remember her medical knowledge and brilliance. But it was something else — her love — that they say makes Kerry unforgettable.

"She's just one of those unbelievably kind, gentle, very warm people," Dr. Savio said. "It always seems like horrible things happen to the most wonderful people, and that is what happened to her."

Savio still draws inspiration from Kerry's life. "Knowing Kerry inspired those around her to do good — not just to make money but to do good."

Kruger said, "She was extraordinarily bright; she just had tremendous knowledge. But probably even more important than that is her heart. I mean she just loved the kids, loved their parents; she had no judgment of anyone's choices. Whatever went on in the family, she was just there supporting them and loving them."

Kruger said that Kerry reminded her most of Susan Sarandon's portrayal of the unconditional love shown by Catholic nun Helen Prejean in "Dead Man Walking." Kruger explained, "Kerry was more giggly and humorous, but to have that love is an extraordinary quality, a rare quality. Her brightness was great, but her other qualities were more rare."

Smiles, like beauty, may be only skin deep in some. Dr. Savio said that Kerry's warmth and joyfulness came from deeper places, for she had a lasting acquaintance with pain long before her death. "She just wore her smile all the time," he said. "But she lived in incredible physical pain, multiple back injuries. She was smiling all the time but living with really bad pain."

KERRY'S FAMILY KEEPS IT ALIVE

Kerry's extended family and in-laws were instrumental in founding Kerry's Kids, providing the administrative know-how, finding the financial support, and above all, being the sheer driving force needed to jump-start a mobile health clinic and keep it rolling all these years.

Dr. Kruger explained: "They took care of all those practical things completely, for one. But I also think that the spirit — the desire for this to work, their availability — has made this possible. Kerry's family, who are not medical, had such love for her, and just wanted to make this work, coming to us, working together, and just breaking their necks to make everything happen. I think they kept it alive."

Kathy Dean, Kerry's mother-in-law, now helps coordinate the health van's visits to homeless sites. She described the meaning of Kerry's Kids to the family her daughter-in-law left behind. "It's a blessing. If we didn't have this piece of Kerry with us it would be so tragic, because her vision was to meet the medical needs of indigent children. It's a wonderful legacy because she was so compassionate and caring and people have just taken up this mantle of her quest and vision."

The family laid the groundwork for Kerry's Kids immediately after her death, setting up a memorial fund in her honor that made it all possible. The pediatricians and medical staff at Kerry's Kids are all volunteers, but money is needed for supplies, medications, insurance and other expenses. Oakland Head Start donates the RV, the vehicle maintenance and gas; and Bennie Smith is behind the wheel, driving the RV to homeless sites all over Oakland and West Berkeley. The women of All Saints Lutheran Church collected scores of teddy bears to donate to Kerry's Kids, and those are given out along with children's books to make the health van's visits more special for the homeless kids.

But Kerry's Kids operates on a shoestring budget, receiving no governmental grants from Alameda County or the federal government, even though it is providing health care for the children in poverty that are supposed to be cared for by governmental medical assistance and funding.

The beauty of Kerry's Kids is that it was not launched by a big medical foundation or by seasoned professional fundraisers. Rather, it was launched by relative babes in the woods, by people who had a dream of giving away free health care to homeless children, by family members who were faithful to the last dream of a tragically murdered daughter and wife. All they had when they started out was heart and compassion and commitment, and that is still true today.

DIRECTING IT FROM ABOVE

But if the program is modest, without governmental support or big celebrity benefits, it may benefit from something still more powerful. Dr. Kruger says flatly, "I think Kerry's directing it from above, myself, personally speaking."

Each year, Children's Hospital awards a resident the Kerry Spooner-Dean Memorial Award that honors a doctor's commitment to delivering health care to underserved communities. The 2001 award winner was Dana Weintraub, M.D., a chief resident at Children's and volunteer pediatrician for Kerry's Kids.

Kerry's work lives on today in the children she helped while alive, the Children's Hospital scholarship, and, above all, in Kerry's Kids. Dr. Kruger said, "I think Kerry's Kids is a great dream come true. In a lot of ways, I see ripples, like how you throw a pebble in the water and these ripples go out. It's just how goodness can spread. It just spread beyond to people she never met in her lifetime."

Friends recall how resilient Kerry had been in life, how she kept bouncing back. Kerry's Kids might be the ultimate act of bouncing back from sorrow and tragedy.

Kruger said, "I think it's a combination of her dream, the person she was, all the people nearby that knew her and wanted to make some sense of her life not being longer than it was. No one knows about tomorrow, but it just seems unbelievable. I mean, a lot of us saw her that day (she was killed) and she was fine, you know?

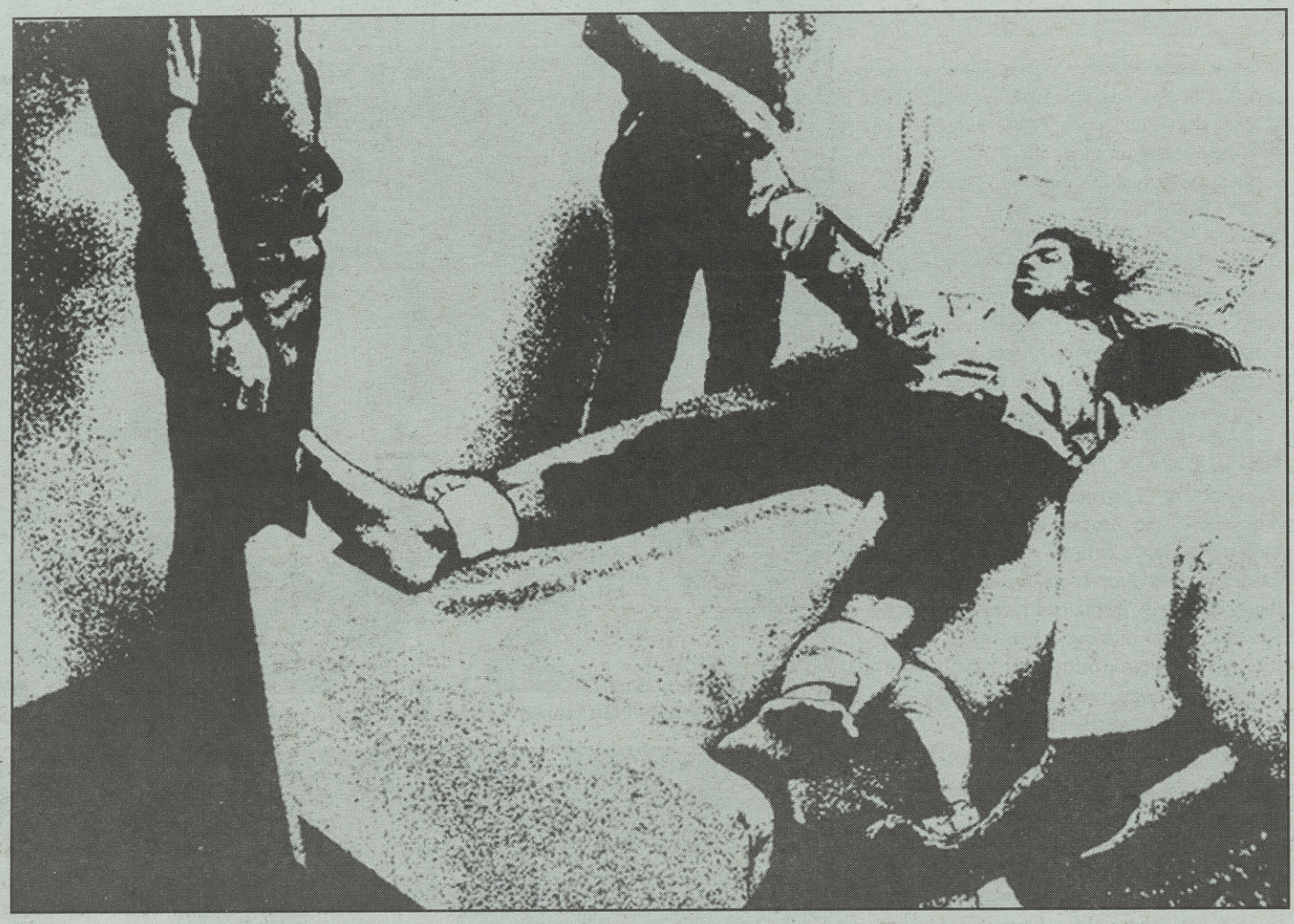
"So it helped to just bring some little bit of peace — that she was somehow still a little bit here, or that she would have at least liked that Kerry's Kids was happening since she didn't have enough time to finish it herself."

Kruger, her friend in life, works to this day in honor of Kerry's legacy. Asked what Kerry's reaction would be if she could see the continuation of her life's work, Dr. Kruger said, "I think she would be pleased and just be so grateful. She'd say, 'Oh, thank you guys for doing this! I can't believe you did this!' "

Acts of Cruelty Disguised as Mental Health Care

Cruelty is an accepted norm in places and times where certain people and groups are categorized as less than human.

by Jack Bragen



A person is bound in heavy leather restraints in a psychiatric hospital. *From "Hurry Tomorrow," a film by Richard Cohen*

In my experience, mental health practitioners are capable of cruelty. This is partly a fact of life, for any human being has this capability. The moral task in front of human beings is to recognize this in ourselves and to prevent ourselves from harming others or ourselves. Some mental health practitioners have failed miserably at this task.

Mental health practitioners are in positions of power over those they treat. If they practice their profession badly, or inhumanely, it can cause lasting psychological damage, or in some cases physical damage, to the person receiving treatment. The power given to mental health practitioners intrinsically carries responsibility to employ it wisely and with compassion. This doesn't always happen.

Psychiatry, accepted as a branch of science, has practitioners who dismiss the perspectives of those they treat. Psychiatrists learn to doubt whatever their "client" says, with the assumption that the minds of mental health consumers are always inaccurate. And they are taught to dismiss our suffering. When we feel pain and express it, a psychiatrist may dismiss this as being delusional or hallucinatory. They may disbelieve that a mentally ill person is actually capable of suffering, unlike themselves and their friends and families.

Cruelty is an accepted norm in places and times where certain people and groups are categorized as less than human. The lie that is disseminated says that people in a particular category are incapable of suffering because they are not fully human or don't have actual consciousness.

When someone is "four-pointed," which means tying a human being to a table with heavy leather restraints, it can create emotional scars that do not go away. When someone is given a heavy shot of Haloperidol, a powerful antipsychotic drug which induces all manner of awful side effects, including long-term brain damage, practitioners have an unreasonable expectation that we should be okay with this.

And then there are some psychologists who misuse their techniques and whose supposed therapy is nothing but manipulation and possibly mind control. If we try to point out something the therapist is doing wrong, our complaint is redirected into analysis. This is a tried and true approach that therapists often use to avoid culpability and maintain control of the conversation.

The medications we are forced to take are a way of disabling many of our defenses. When someone is medicated, it becomes easier for us to be controlled through a standard set of therapeutic manipulation methods. These powerful neuroleptic drugs work by disabling the higher powers of the mind.

In outpatient mental health treatment venues, mental health practitioners program us to believe that we can't do anything, such as work (other than cleaning toilets or sweeping a floor), or handling our own responsibilities. A therapist once assumed I was unable to bake a cake from a cake mix without supervision.

Medication causes mental health consumers to be pliable and malleable. Practitioners may take advantage of that.

After decades of experiencing the mental health treatment system, I have learned to avoid some of the pitfalls. However, I am still stuck, because of the economic control under which mental health consumers usually live. (Economic suppression is another subject for another essay.)

Mental health treatment practitioners: If you are reading this, you need to look at yourselves, and be aware that you have a great deal of power over our thoughts, our minds, our bodies and our lives. Don't misuse that power. With great power comes great responsibility.

Criminal Justice System Belongs in the Stone Age

by Jack Bragen



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

The prison system in the United States, from what I've gathered in the mass media, is not as bad as that of Mexico or some other countries. Americans detained in North Korea could not expect to be well treated, for example. A long time ago, I read a news story of an American actor known for his tough guy image; he was in legal trouble overseas, and was terrified of going to prison in Britain. Thus, the U.S. penal system does not have a monopoly of harsh treatment of those believed to have broken laws.

However, no rational person would deny that incarceration almost anywhere, including in the United States, is bad. Incarceration in prison systems serves as examples of human beings nearly at our worst. There is no moral high ground among sheriffs, deputies or the other people serving as prison guards; I know this. The prisoners are subjected to dehumanizing conditions, and are treated far worse than animals in any modern-day zoo.

The concept that we should punish criminals is archaic. It is based on the idea that "you did something bad, now we're going to do something bad back to you." This idea of retribution is completely apart from the concept of compassion.

Punishment probably discourages some individuals from committing crimes. However, in some instances, it causes people who are desperate to do anything, including killing people, to avoid being caught and imprisoned.

For example, when I was essentially kidnapped at gunpoint at the age of 19 in a holdup of a supermarket where I was working, the two gunmen were very fearful that I might be able to identify them. I had to repeatedly assure them that I could not. They wore ski hats over their heads and disguised their voices. If they had felt that there was a strong chance of me being able to identify them, I wouldn't be here.

Some hostage situations that were widely publicized in recent years have unfolded horribly. In some instances, individuals running from police have led car chases that were extremely dangerous. Some, on the verge of being captured, have committed suicide rather than face imprisonment. Some have taken hostages, and have killed those hostages. The prospect of imprisonment, rather than causing obedience to the law, has actually caused extreme violence, at least some of the time.

Certainly, we need to have deterrence against crime so that most citizens will not consider it as an option. However, the levels of abuse in the prison and jail systems are inappropriate. We would be better off if, in many cases, people could be punished through less severe civil penalties.

Also, not enough effort is being made to salvage people's lives. Many people have been raised in situations where they were abused, and were never given a fair chance by society to better themselves and their conditions. Still others were exposed to brutalizing environments that may have caused them to become numb to violence and the suffering of others.

And, in fact, a good percentage of those being punished in the "criminal justice" system are there because they are mentally ill, and their symptoms of mental illness caused them to inadvertently do something illegal. Criminalizing and punishing people due to mental illness is senseless, and it punishes people for having a disease that we did not create.

What about asking the "criminals" to communicate and to talk about what is hurting them so much? Most "criminals" probably have a story to tell — perhaps a story that many successful and pampered individuals are unwilling to hear.

When people are given prison sentences for violation of laws, it perpetuates the cycle of abuse that might have caused an individual to do something illegal. If you want to talk about "hardened criminals," the prison system is probably responsible for much of that hardening. Maybe the penal system could employ more understanding and sincere kindness, in which prisoners are not being manipulated. That, by itself, could be a way of getting us out of this awful cycle of abuse.

Although criminal penalties may deter the average citizen from considering crime as an option, too often the prison system is counterproductive and horribly cruel.

Class Warfare in West Oakland

from page 1

one must be privileged to have disposable money for such luxuries. In contrast, their homeless neighbors don't even have money to pay for their most basic necessities.

None of the emails in these exchanges between businesses and City officials told us what a person living in a tent thought or felt while watching parents pay to have their kids in circus classes. However, the businesses did email about direct confrontations between them and the homeless community.

On July 27, 2017, Kinetic Arts Center emailed the City that "Last night a homeless person from the encampment violently verbally accosted one of my employees while he was trying to lockup because my employee wouldn't let the homeless person in to get water (which of course this person is not paying for)."

Angel Cakes sent an email in response stating, "We also had a problem on Friday where one of the tent residents who was obviously really high on something, kept coming in our store and bothering customers and staff about every 30 minutes between noon and 7 p.m. on Friday. We called Fire/EMS to help him, but he refused service and it was super stressful."

Had the homeless man watched customers pass him to casually buy expensive cupcakes while he starved? His concerns seemed not to be medical. Did Angel Cakes ask or did they simply want him removed? There were no emails from the homeless people to tell their sides of the confrontations. How did they feel being homeless among showy privilege?

The gentrifiers used the power of the Internet to organize and make demands on the City of Oakland. These emails were often vicious and divisive. For example, on July 13, 2017, Kinetic Arts Center wrote:

"As a result of the trash piles and camps, the rats have migrated over to and are so bad at Kinetic Arts Center now (and at surrounding business) we are catching 6 a night! We have children here all day long at camp and in the middle of the day they are just hanging around next to the garden where the kids have their lunch.

"How do we deal with this? I am fast losing patience not to mention how depressing and dangerous it is working next to dangerous people who don't care about living next to writhing garbage piles."

Then on July 19, 2017, KAC wrote: "I am considering publishing a letter to my clients with a list of ways they help us all mitigate the problem including asking them to spread the word not to leave castoffs with the homeless as a gesture of kindness."



Lee, manager of a section of the large encampment at the end of Wood Street in Oakland, had just lost his home and all his belongings in a fire in January 2017. It took the Oakland Fire Department a half hour to respond. Walter Thompson photo, Hoodline

Then on August 18, 2017, KAC wrote to the City, "When can we get these homeless moved? Please."

This was an unfair vilification of the homeless. People in encampments live in fear. They often feel terrorized by violence and deprivation — and have only tents for protection. They cannot control the trash outsiders dump near them. The homeless people are directly exposed to the dangers of rats invading their small tents as they sleep or eat. The KAC parents fear seeing rats; homeless people also fear being bitten by a diseased rat. Unlike the customers of KAC, homeless people do not have the privilege of leaving to get away from the dangers.

Contrary to the statements in the KAC emails, most people in the encampments want a clean, safe environment just like anyone else. Every month, the Auset Movement provides food for people in several encampments. They ask encampment residents what they need. The residents always ask for cleaning supplies, such as brooms and garbage bags. They especially ask for lots and lots of bleach.

Many times, gentrifiers prefaced their attacks with proclamations of sympathy. For example, in a November 27, 2017, email to Rebecca Chekouras of the upscale Phoenix Lofts, the City acknowledged that she and many others opposed the Outdoor Navigation Center — which the City of Oakland meant to help the homeless.

Chekouras responded the next day with an email to the City that included: "I worked for several years with the Homeless Advocacy Project of the Bar Association of San Francisco. While I don't claim any special expertise, I may understand some things better than the average citizen. I have some appreciation for how the stress of homelessness impacts an individual psyche. Owning tangible goods — a dresser, a couch — means something. Piling these abandoned items around a disheveled tent can sometimes provide a barrier against a hostile environment and enhance a feeling of safety. It's understandable. But that doesn't mean we need to accept it."

Later, she demanded that the City of Oakland ban the tents that provided the homeless with the small sense of security and protection she herself had noted.

In fact, the gentrifiers' newsletter, titled the "6th and Brush Street Homeless Neighborhood Newsletter," almost seemed to declare war between them and the homeless people. Its very divisive mission "is to keep everyone informed about the current impact of our neighborhood homeless on our neighborhood. The intention is to, at the very least, make the non-homeless residents feel like someone is listening to us." The newsletter's role was to empower the gentrifiers by organizing and unifying them.

Whatever the newsletter promoted, the City of Oakland must not listen just to the "non-homeless." The City must listen to the homeless as well. After all, the homeless people are citizens and residents of Oakland. Many of them were born and raised in Oakland. They are entitled to the same protections as the people who the newsletter called "non-homeless."

The newsletter even demanded the forced removal of homeless people: "We want the homeless gone from this neighborhood. It's time for this neighborhood of homeless to be some other Oakland resident's problem for awhile. We've done our time. Please move them to Montclair where those residents have far more resources than we do to pay for the water, and the garbage pick up, and the rat extermination."

According to an August 1, 2017, email to the City, the managing director of Kinetic Arts Center is also the self-appointed editor-in-chief of the newsletter.

This newsletter escalated the West Oakland class war. So which side must the City of Oakland take? And why didn't this class warfare get more media attention?

Why Don't Homeless People Just Go Stay with Their Families?

by Andy Pope

People who become homeless are often asked why they haven't moved in with their families in order to get off the streets. I can only answer by sharing my personal experience. However, it might point to some general insights.

I first became homeless in April 2004. In May of that year, I asked my brother if I could stay at his house, where I knew he had a spare room. He said no. I asked him why. He said: "I won't expand."

It hurt me. I was not drinking. I was not on drugs. I was out in the cold. Although at the time I took it as rejection, I later realized that he needed privacy. He probably had some private practice that he wished not to share with anyone, let alone his brother, who might be disdainful of whatever private habit he indulged. That's just a theory. But I'll go on.

I asked my sister if I could stay at her house. She said no. She, however, gave me a reason. She had a very small house, was aging with health concerns, in a wheelchair, and with live-in care. My presence in the house would not have helped her health, and I can understand that. (She is since deceased.)

I was already running out of relatives, but the point is that once I had asked them all if I could stay there, *all of them* had said no. At the time, I took it as though there were something terribly wrong with me. But that was not the case. They all had reasons why they couldn't permit another person in their space.

My best female friend while I was homeless was a woman who had undergone two strokes, and as a result, had difficulty speaking. Again, she did not use drugs. But it took great patience to understand what she was saying or trying to do. Her relatives responded by never having her over to their houses, even on holidays and special occasions.

She would cry. "I used to play tennis. I used to wait tables. I used to ride a bicycle." She would be arrested while she was sleeping, and once spent four nights in jail because the cops had no empathy for her condition. The police woke her up because she wasn't sleeping in the right place — a parking lot — and when she began to talk in strange half-words, they clamped handcuffs on her and put her in jail.

In other words, she was criminalized for being gravely disabled and for sleeping.

Believe me, I tried to seek shelter from family members and friends, and yet I was homeless for a lot of years. People seemed to think it should have been easy for me to have pulled out of it. But for the better part of 12 years, all roads in the Bay Area only led back to homelessness.

People would ask: "What about the halfway house? The rehabs? The shelters? The board and care homes?" Board and care, maybe — if I were the type who wanted to completely give up all his freedoms. But I'm not that type — thank God.

So it wasn't too long before I realized that all the well-meaning advice was useless. Those advisers had never been homeless, and they had never been me.

All roads led me back to a quiet spot beneath the stars where nobody could find me and where I could say my prayers. That I am now living indoors and free to illuminate the sordid realities of homelessness for those who do not know — that is the answer to those prayers.

I hope this helps.

Life Beyond
by Rhachey Simmons

I hope to live past 26, and beyond that
— this thing called life is short,
and I'll live it everyday like it's my last,
without wearing any mask.
Being me, imperfectly, happy or sad
— I see myself living beyond
whatever I may expect for myself

Special Olympics, Wheelchair Event
by Claire J. Baker

With rags tied around sore hands
wheelchair racers spin
large wheels forward, no

strain of who comes in "first"
knowing "just competing"
is a big WIN... Stirring up dust

& wonder, these brave break
their own records, make "never
give up" a household phrase.

Dad's Philosophy
by Claire J. Baker

"An avid student of human nature,"
Dad had a street spirit of his own.
He wrote this side of clover:

"Experience is what's left over
when everything else is gone,
so pick up the wreck & move on."

Dad, I've a small apartment,
each month I pay the rent.
But I do keep the words you sent.



"Visions of Mother Nature" — a mural created by the young artists of Youth Spirit Artworks under the guidance of senior artist Angel Jesus Perez.

Grievance Counselor on Both Ends
by MameDiarra Abdur Rahman

This week has been filled with emotions two people with babies
Fresh out of the womb and one death. I think about how I'm messenger
For the womb and one death. I think about how I'm the messenger for the in
Between. Being nurturer one minute and a grievance counselor the next.
When will my limbo stop torturing me during sunrise and set?

The Street of Dreams
by Claire J. Baker

The street lamps are bright!
But not enough, it seems,
to focus illumination on
"the street of rusted dreams."

Promises
by Mary Stackiewicz

You promised a lot, I trusted a lot.
You lied, I lied.
All the "I love yous" stopped,
and I felt as if I walked into a wall.
The distance between us grew—
I was two states away.
All the love I had for you faded
after you decided to stay there.
You wouldn't move.
Now you have moved
but in a different direction than me.
We're no longer in love.
We have a child —
What will he want when he grows up,
I wonder?
You promised, I trusted. We lied.

Sally on Street Corner
by Claire J. Baker

She plays with three white marbles,
keeps rolling them in her hands.
says: if you can see their shadows
you can come with her to heaven,

Sally once taught Philosophy at Cal.
She lost her professorship when her
husband beat her senseless, sold
their home, kidnapped the kids.

Sally, take care...

One Nation Under God
by Mary Rudge

With broken eyeglasses and broken veins
she stands on the corner showing things
have a kaleidoscopic other view.
When she asks spare change
but you pass by
her only response is "God bless you"
and a broken-toothed smile.
She shows you how hearts really break,
can you feel your own?
She lets you see a whole country with
a government full of broken promises.

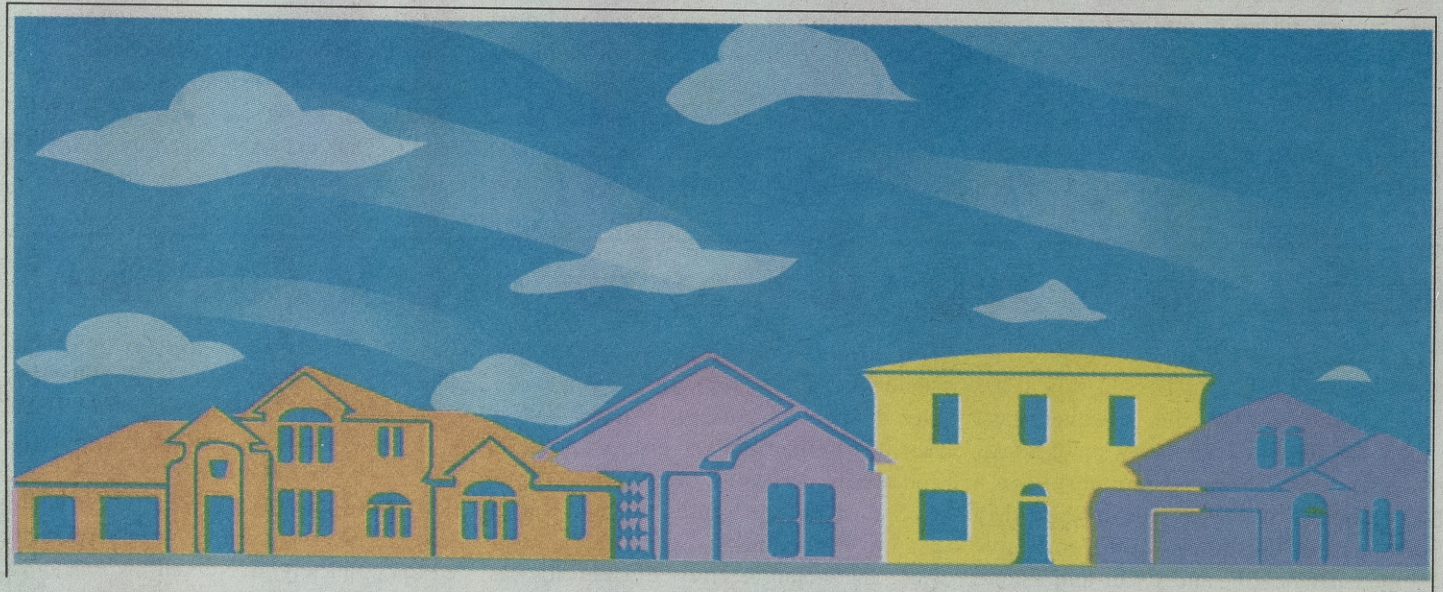
Love Over Material Things
by Rhachey Simmons

I don't really care about material things
If I want something materialistic, I'll buy it.
But love is amazing, I'll take it over anything
— house and a car, anyday.
I can't be bought.
Love rules my heart.
If someone wants my heart, he has to love
every part of me, wholeheartedly.
Love lives on forever, no
matter the storm,
or weather.

She Chose to Kill Herself
by Mary Stackiewicz

The choice was hers, but
Her life is shared
by the people that care about her.
She makes a choice to go in circles,
driving me crazy into pain. The choice was hers,
as she hit the pipe with the crystal:
"Meth is hard to kick." She says she doesn't know.
She is a diamond, but the man she loves sees
her as a rock, like a grain of sand on a beach...
Ooooh, you're killing me slowly as I watch
you kill yourself ... but the choice was hers.

Grand Opening of Youth Spirit Artwork's Shanice Kiel Gallery



Welcome to the Neighborhood

The grand opening of the Shanice Kiel Gallery

April 21, 2018 | 1-4pm | 3324 Adeline St. Berkeley, CA

Film Screening: 'Welcome to the Neighborhood'
by Director/Producer Pam Uzzell

Guest Speakers:
Roger Kiel & Mildred Howard
Remarks by Mayor Jesse Arreguin
and Council Member Ben Bartlett.

Shanice Kiel Gallery

The Shanice Kiel Gallery is a youth-led YSA flagship gallery & retail store. It is named after beloved YSA participant and leader, Shanice Kiel, who was murdered in 2011, at age 19. She was a sophomore at SF State at the time of her death.

The Grand Opening will honor Kiel, and also focus on the gentrification and displacement of longtime residents from Bay Area neighborhoods due to huge real estate price increases. South Berkeley is now less than 20 percent African American due to gentrification.

The grand opening will feature a celebration of Youth Spirit Artworks' *100 Homes for Homeless Youth Campaign*, organized in response to our youth's experiences with the housing and homelessness crisis. This campaign includes YSA's first-in-the-nation Youth Tiny House Village, which upon completion in July 2018, will provide stable and supportive housing for 25 homeless and housing-unstable Bay Area youth.

The event will feature art on the Bay Area housing crisis and guests Berkeley Mayor Jesse Arreguin and District 3 Councilmember Ben Bartlett.

For more info contact: 510-282-0396 or see www.youthapiritartworks.org